

*A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master Degree in Management from  
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How does strategic and tactical alignment, effort coordination, internal communication and process standardization affect PT's efficiency and effectiveness on e-mail and SMS marketing strategies?

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# Abstract

The following project at Portugal Telecom (PT) is motivated by the needs employees stated, namely strategic alignment, coordination, communication and process standardization. After analyzing the data collected, the results stated this unit is aligned with the overall strategy, but lacks tactical unity. There is lack of coordination damaged by the poor communication, and 25% of the e-mails and SMSs collected have content going against the standardization rules. It is suggested the development of inter-department shared goals, monitoring of every e-mail and SMS through a unit-wide software, joint planning in activity scheduling and enforcing standardized guidelines through courses and regular monitoring.

**Keywords:** Strategy Alignment, Tactic Alignment, Vision, Coordination, Planning, Task Interdependence, Interaction, Internal Communication, Information Transparency, Individual Objectives, Group Objectives, Process Standardization, Organizational Structure.

# Background and Context

Portugal Telecom (PT) is a telecommunications operator having the greater part of its business in Portugal. It also operates in Brazil, Angola and Mozambique, but with less significance. PT was founded in 1994 with the fusion of Telecom Portugal, TLP and TDP. Since 1994, PT had a government stake, which gradually decreased until 2000. Today, the company offers products and services on fixed and mobile communications, multimedia and enterprise data and solutions. Since June 2015, the company was acquired by the Altice group in the context of its debt conflicts.

Along the organizational structure of PT, the “*Unidade de Transformação Digital e Online*” (UTDO) appears as the most recent section created – March, 2014. This unit emerges with the purpose of increasing the digital and online efforts of the company, as it believes innovation is a key factor to keep its leadership and competitiveness in the telecom market. The UTDO is composed by six departments, from which three focus on specific sections of the customer lifecycle – Digital Marketing, E-Commerce and E-Care – and the other three are transversal to the whole unit – Design & Web Technology, Reporting & Analytics and Transformation Projects.

The project assigned to this team is focused on direct strategies regarding e-mail and SMS marketing. In the first meeting held in PT, workers stated that e-mails and SMSs were in need of aid, if the company was to increase its digital presence. In this sense, it was necessary to design the journey the customer went through when purchasing a product/service and analyze the role of both these communication means on each stage. The objective is to increase the impact of these means through higher deliverability, open and click-through rates. This was the first problem exposed. Moreover, since the UTDO was recently formed, and due to the recent restructuration process, employees stated that the unit was lacking organization and integration. The degree of communication, cooperation, process harmonization and integration between

departments was described as poor and inefficient, according to the employees' perspective. This was the second great problem stated – and the focus of the present work – with great potential for improvement and the need for it was clearly stated. Later, on the last week of October, a third meeting was held, this time being the UTDO director present. The team not only presented the problem and solution structure it was following, but also the current developments and reviews already performed. The unit director showed great appreciation, but also shared a possible constraint that could jeopardize the focus of the final output. Both problems being analyzed seemed to require a great effort to be reviewed in only three and a half months, even if they were both considerably affecting the unit. In other words, he was afraid that not narrowing the focus could have consequences in the value of the output. Having worked on both problems for more than one and a half months, the team had already understood that the dimension of both questions was considerably large. In this context, the team decided to focus uniquely on the e-mail and SMS strategies and disregard the company internal affairs of alignment and coordination directly affecting these strategies. After this meeting, the team gathered and reduced the scope of the project and increased the focus on the topic selected. Nevertheless, outside the company's environment and in the master's dissertation context, it was decided to keep developing this theme. The team had already gathered a considerable amount of resources to explore this topic. However, the reason behind maintaining the development of this work consists in the fact that the topics of objectives alignment, effort coordination, internal communication and process standardization are fruitful and worth studying in the context of a management degree, as they allow to reach deep insights on past and current management practices through the considerable literature and accumulated knowledge available on the topics.

# Literature Review

In order to generate value and produce practical recommendations regarding the internal integration problems identified in PT, there are four subjects of study required to understand in depth: strategy and tactic alignment between workers; effort coordination and task interdependency; internal communication; process standardization. Based on these topics, a sequential logical structure division for the following state-of-the-art review was made.

Strategy and tactic alignment across every level of an organization's hierarchy contributes immensely to increases in productivity and employee satisfaction (Cato & Gordon, 2012). As workers understand the organization's vision and type of objectives that most helpfully assist in pursuing its mission, the creation of value by the individual grows (Cato & Gordon, 2012) – relation a) exposed in **Exhibit A**. This is a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and the employee, as both agents are rewarded for the adoption of an alignment policy. As a result, if a company desires to achieve higher performance and enjoy a greater lifetime span, it should require the assistance and support of its workers by fully integrating them and providing rich information about the organization's context, objectives, values and methods (Klingvall, 2008). Thus, the concept of line-of-sight (LOS) urges as extremely useful in this organizational context, as it consists in the capacity of a certain employee to comprehend the company's strategy and produce results that fully comply with it (Boswell, Bingham, & Colvin, 2006). LOS is a relevant trait that should be present in the individual's professional behavior, as it influences the process of selecting a specific course of action coherent with the firm's plan of business (Boswell et al., 2006). In this sense, it is reasonable to state that workers in an organization should maintain shared company-wise goals while developing their functions in order to increase the alignment with the organization's strategy – relation b) exposed in **Exhibit A**.

Notwithstanding, in companies of larger dimension, the division of labor is vast, which increases the likelihood of existing employees unconcerned about the company's objectives. Thus, the organizational design should ensure that the tasks and roles of each employee are necessary and require the person to be fully integrated in the company's frame (Klingvall, 2008). In a maximum exponent, workers become organizational centaurs in the sense that they embody "actions on behalf of organizations and actions on behalf of the natural person; it is part organization, part human" (Ahrne, 1994: 28).

Given these points, if the organization fails to embed its strategic and tactical guidelines in its human resources, adaptation and coordination conflicts will rise (Klingvall, 2008). In other words, working towards a common and homogeneous objective will reduce the margin of doubt of each employee job role, which decreases the likelihood for conflicts between workers. However, it is important to note that shared goals are only viable when communication and information transparency exists, since without it shared goals show lower performance of employees when compared to the establishment of individual goals (De Snoo, 2011) – relation c) in **Exhibit A**.

As to coordination, it is defined by the consistency and coherence of each worker's activity with every other activities performed by other members of the organization (Cheng, 1983) – relation d) in **Exhibit A**. In this context, activity planning seems an important task, if employees are to be organized and coordinated. However, planning every activity, role and project to be performed by each member of the company may be difficult for one person to do (De Snoo, 2011; Kreipl & Pinedo, 2004). In this sense, it is more effective to reduce this complexity through the division of planning tasks (Kreipl & Pinedo, 2004). This division can be done following a certain variable – e.g.: time horizons, organization's facilities available, product and geographical areas (Kreipl & Pinedo, 2004). This logic outlines the structural design of a company, and, today, the conventional organizational structure follows this reasoning – hence,

the existence of departments handling different products, professional areas and geographical sites, among other key variants. Decentralizing the decision-making process may simplify the individual task, nevertheless it increases dispersion and strategy inconsistency (MacCarthy & Wilson, 2001). Thus, following the task decomposition logic, the necessity for cooperation, communication and coordination in the decision-making process rises (MacCarthy & Wilson, 2001). In other words, the interdependency between workers increases, since “team members are task interdependent when they must share materials, information, or expertise in order to achieve a desired output or performance” (Van Der Vegt & Van De Vliert, 2001). Hence, task interdependence demands people to develop professional relationships and cooperative strategies in order for each employee to attain success (Mitchell & Silver, 1990) – relation e) exposed in **Exhibit A**.

By increasing the level of communication between workers, they align objectives and methods for their individual work, allowing them to become more productive and add more value for the company (MacCarthy & Wilson, 2001) – relation f) presented in **Exhibit A**. Likewise, when designing the organizational structure and task distribution, firms must take into account the coordination needs of workers and the type of policies that facilitate this practice (De Snoo, 2011). In this organizational context, communication levels and the degree of information transparency appear to be relevant variables to consider, if an increase in performance is to be observed. By managing a constant flow of transparent information, not only across different levels, but also inside each level, the organization enables workers to improve performance and gives them a voice for further suggestions on other people’s activities, which increases the degree of effort coordination (De Snoo, 2011) – relation g) presented in **Exhibit A**.

The most conventional way of communicating is through dialogue. According to Roman (2005), there are various benefits in promoting dialogue among workers. Firstly, dialogue enables progress regarding the quality of communication – mainly, because by sharing personal

thoughts and observations, people disclose themselves and allow the foundation of empathy and understanding. Secondly, through dialogue, employees can sharpen their understanding and knowledge of the organization, since the circumstances will influence people to talk about their work, their objectives and their methods. Thirdly, dialogue empowers people and gives them energy and motivation, since they find answers about themselves and about their appropriate course of action inside the organization. Fourthly, through dialogue, it is natural that the flow of thought engages in a creative process and the production of ideas increases, which can be extremely beneficial for the organization (Roman, 2005).

Be that as it may, Klingvall (2008) presents a valid argument contradicting a high level of communication between workers. The author states that team members can also assume a negative influence on each other by hardening the type of methods to use while performing the job role, which can damage one's own creativity and inspiration, as it closes the individual's vision and freedom of thought – further influencing the degree of flexibility of the firm. Optimally, the level of communication between team members should be moderate, in the sense that it allows workers to think independently, while being connected to the other members. Following this logic, the company will be composed by weak professional links, but it is this loose ties that give room for adaptability and flexibility, as they prevent the company's culture to stagnate (Klingvall, 2008).

Furthermore, process standardization is also extremely important, as it immensely benefits the company by increasing the consistency attached to the services quality, hence creating a benefic perception of the service rendered, or product acquired (Ungan, 2006). Standardization consists in formally shaping the policies, guidelines, rules and procedures to be carried when developing an activity (Jang & Lee, 1998). In this context, the focus should be narrowed to the standardization of services, since this is the main business of PT. Thus, it is relevant to state that services standardization provides many advantages for the companies adopting such



policies. Firstly, it facilitates the customer process of comparing alternative services, since the person can easily know what to expect from contracting an organization to render a certain service. At the same time, it benefits the company, as it eases monitoring and pricing its services, due to their homogeneity. Secondly, as previously mentioned, it increases the services quality through rises in consistency and coherency – minimizing uncertainty and variability owing to differences in the way employees render services. Thirdly, standardization allows growth in terms of productivity, given that it optimizes resource allocation (Ungan, 2006; Vasile & Laurentiu, 2008) – relation h) exposed in **Exhibit A**.

As a method to apply standardization of business processes, it arises the documentation of the accumulated enterprise knowledge followed by guidelines and specific rules. The difficulty in documenting resides in gathering information regarding know-how, since this type of knowledge is more tacit and subconscious than tangible (Ungan, 2006). This type of information is tough to verbalize, due to the fact that it is directly obtained from experiences, actions and shared thoughts. The most common method to reach this type of knowledge is through conversation, storytelling and shared experience (Zack, 1999). The most helpful framework found was one provided by Mustafa Ungan (2006) decomposing the process of standardization in seven steps: identify the process; identify the process masters (people who have experience and may provide a valuable input); build a team; define the process and break it down into steps; acquire the knowledge for each step; codify and verify; combine and place in a standard form.

**Exhibit A** intends to represent the concepts previously discussed and the relationships between them. The figure sums up the previous review of the scientific literature gathered and was developed with the sole aim of assisting the reader while reasoning along the present work.

# Methodology

The topics of alignment, coordination, communication and standardization are greatly related to company internal knowledge, procedures and experiences, and to customers' perceptions that help shape conclusions on the externalization effects of these topics. Thus, techniques developed by specialists were applied to allow a consistent and significant output.

Firstly, individual in-depth interviews were conducted to five key employees to understand their thoughts and considerations regarding the company's strategic and tactical objectives, key experiences/processes along the customer life cycle and current e-mail and SMS approach. The employees interviewed were from the following departments: e-commerce, digital marketing and e-care. The other two interviewees were the head of the digital marketing department and the director of the UTDO. There were two main objectives: identify the topics and processes that could yield a substantial impact and uncover potential gaps between strategic and tactical priorities among employees. Thus, the interview guide developed (**Exhibit B**) enabled the interviewer to engage in an informal conversation-like interview – as follow-up questions depended on each answer – and probe the respondent for hidden information. This guide was built under the guidelines established by five reputed authors (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001; Malhotra, 1999).

On one hand, in-depth interviews provide deeper levels of insights than focus groups, as probing can easily be applied. Also, responses can be directly assigned to a specific respondent, while in focus groups it can be difficult to determine who established a particular answer. In individual interviews the pressure to comply with the group consensus is non-existing – free information sharing. On the other hand, it is difficult and expensive to find quality interviewers to conduct a consistent interview – in this case, the interviewers belonged to the team. Additionally, since this type of interview does not follow a rigid structure, the answers from the respondents are susceptible of being influenced by the interviewer, hence damaging the trustworthiness of the

information obtained. Lastly, due to the method qualitative nature, the information is subjective and may be complex to analyze (Malhotra, 1999).

Secondly, an online survey – developed with PT’s market studies department (**Exhibit C**) – was conducted in the second week of November 2015 with the primary aim of understanding the touchpoint usage along the phases of the customer life cycle. As secondary objective, customer’s opinions were also questioned – communications frequency, relevance, and brand relationship. The latter aim matters most to the topic of this thesis. It was preferred a quantitative method for two motives: decreased variability of answers; large number of answers propensity. Among the quantitative methods, the survey was the more appropriate, since it was the least time consuming and expensive. Also, it provided the lowest proneness to bias and the highest dissemination potential, as it could be shared through social media and e-mail – it was self-administrated through professional and personal networks. But, the digital channels provide drawbacks such as low completion rates and quality of answers – 1322 surveys were initiated, but only 913 were completed. Observing the sampling characteristics (presented in **Exhibit D**) and the dissemination platforms used, it is likely that a non-probability sampling was considered – consequence of the networks used. Focusing the analysis on the impact alignment, coordination and communication may have on the customer brand perception, it was necessary to analyze questions 20 and 21 (present in **Exhibit C**). These questions are confirmatory instead of exploratory, using a Likert scale as a measurement of agreement with the sentences displayed. The distance between categories is assumed to be equal and the respondents also perceive this distance as equal, allowing the conversion of the data into a quantitative scale (interval variables). The objective is to analyze descriptive statistics and test if the difference of values obtained between PT and the other telecom operators regarding the content relevance of each type of messaging (e-mail and SMS) is statistically significant (based on the standard 5% significance level).

Thirdly, a documentary analysis was performed not only regarding PT's internal data, but also considering external documents. Internal information consisted in data about e-mails and SMSs (provided by the departments) and in a document called "*Guia Essencial de Estilo*" (Essential Styling Guide – ESG). First, the collected data about e-mails had to be sorted by type – resulting in 28 different e-mail types that grouped 266 specific e-mail examples that counted an e-mails sent total of 26.665.004. Each e-mail type was characterized by qualitative and quantitative variables, from which the most relevant for this topic were: department; category; customer life cycle stage; objective; target list; delivery time; periodicity; automatic/manual; sender name; sender address; subject line; unsubscribe option; bounce rate (hard and soft); open rate; unique click-to-open rate; unsubscribe rate. Similarly, SMSs were also categorized by mostly the same variables, being the only exception the latter quantitative data. In this case, the indicators consisted in the login and registration rate seven days after the text message was sent. However, the data about SMSs was far more incomplete, when compared to the e-mail information. The information available regarding digital marketing and e-commerce consisted only in a general overview of the campaigns performed, not including any specific information. Second, the ESG provided valuable qualitative information on the guidelines and principles to be applied in every communication mean used by PT, including e-mail and SMS. This information regarded general communication principles, text styling rules and preferred tone-of-voice. It gave a solid work basis to evaluate what type of processes are standardized and if that standardization is applied – the latter review was based on the previously mentioned e-mail and SMS database. As to the external data used, support on scientific information – books and articles, mainly – and secondary data were the preferred resources to understand the importance of strategic and tactical alignment along the organizational structure, the impact of effort coordination, the value behind internal communication and the relevance of process standardization.

# Results Presentation

On the first week of October, the first meeting with workers from each consumer department – digital marketing, e-care and e-commerce – was held. PT's workers stated their concerns by transmitting that along with recommendations for e-mail and SMS, there were internal problems that also needed to be solved, in order to increase the recommendations' effectiveness. In this context, the team tried to instigate the type of problems existing internally, in order to achieve the greatest impact with its recommendations. Employees stated that many times people had a different focus and did not feel completely integrated with workers from other departments, even though it was crucial for the creation of synergies. The fact that different departments had different objectives incentivized each department to pursue an individual strategy that regarded its self-interest and was not motivated to communicate and share information with workers from other areas. Also, they complained about lacking unity and tuning on how they performed their roles. In other words, each department had its own methods and process standardization was not felt in their current work. This was the very first input provided by PT's employees regarding this topic, thus explaining the general state of internal affairs.

## *Strategic and Tactical Alignment*

Aligning the employees' perspective with the firm's strategy and integrating their goals in proper context allows the creation of synergies, which increases the company's efficiency and effectiveness (Boswell et al., 2006). With the aim of attaining a deeper understanding of the strategic alignment and LOS of PT's workers in this unit, during the in-depth interviews they were asked the most important strategic objectives the company aimed at, according to their perspective. Every interviewee considered the same objectives as the top three strategic priorities: Financial efficiency (cost control and reduction); Growth and expansion (revenue increase); Customer acquisition. Even though these objectives were not always sorted in the

same order of importance, they attained the first three positions among every employee interviewed. This shows great strategic alignment between employees in PT, since they correctly recognize the top traits that characterize PT's strategy. The fact that workers have a correct perception on the company's larger goals allows them to make decisions in compliance with these objectives following greater contribution to better corporate results. In this sense, it is possible to conclude that there is a common corporate awareness towards collective objectives.

Concerning the alignment of employees on tactical goals of the UTDO, workers from different departments inside this unit were asked to list the priorities of the unit as a whole, during the in-depth interviews. Only two of the interviewees elected the same top three priorities for this department, having the other three people chosen at least one objective differently. Also, there was not an objective unanimously stated by the five employees interviewed, being the most common objectives – with only four people electing them as one of their top three priorities – Increase weight of online sales; Increase open rate, click-through rate and other related KPIs; Increase customer engagement (through offer and contact customization). Moreover, the goal of migrating traffic from offline touchpoints to online channels was elected as one of the most important priorities by two of the interviewees and one person stated aesthetic aspects (e.g.: e-mail layout and website design) as one of the top priorities of this unit. It is possible to conclude that, even though there are common thoughts on some areas, there are still divergences regarding each employee perspective. People working in the UTDO may not have a homogeneous focus on what the main purpose of this unit is – which can harm the unit's results and the company's overall performance, as human capital does not achieve its potential in accomplishing strategic success (Boswell et al., 2006). Having talked with at least one person from every consumer department composing this unit, it was possible to perceive that the tactical objectives they consider most important are the ones more related to their department's

function. For example, the e-commerce interviewee stated that the most important tactical objective for the whole unit was to increase the weight of online sales, while the worker from the e-care department claimed that the top priority was to migrate customers from offline channels to online touchpoints. This tactical misalignment proves there is not a harmonized overall objective in this unit – inexistence of a group shared goal in prejudice of individual goals. However, the establishment of individual objectives at the tactical scope level may have a positive effect on the overall performance, as it is scientifically proven that individual goals allow better performance than group goals, when everything else is constant (De Snoo, 2011). Nonetheless, the same study states that performance on group goals significantly improves when the levels of communication and information transparency increase.

#### *Communication and Effort Coordination*

Following this logic, the analysis shall continue with the review of both the internal communication and information transparency levels and effort coordination inside the UTDO. It is important to group both these topics, since communication of information is a mean to achieve coordination, being the two greatly correlated (De Snoo, 2011). On inter-department coordination, one interviewee stated “there is an urgent need for a reform between departments, in order to increase synergies regarding customer information, current activities and strategic planning”. The poor coordination between departments in the UTDO damages the overall performance of this unit, according to this employee’s perspective. Another worker claimed it was not uncommon for a department to spend hours (sometimes, days) developing an e-mail for a certain database, and when trying to send it, most of the contacts were in quarantine<sup>1</sup>. Many times, the e-mail is postponed until the following week, proving the negative impact that the lack of organization, communication and joint planning have in the unit’s coordination and

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<sup>1</sup> According to PT’s internal rules, if a customer is contacted at least twice through e-mail in the same week, this contact goes into quarantine mode and is not available for contact until the following week.

consequent efficiency and effectiveness. This specific example proves that particular tasks of certain departments are interdependent on tasks carried by other departments in the unit – this task interdependence is positively correlated with the levels of coordination necessary. In this context, shared group goals would be most appropriate, instead of individual objectives (Weldon & Weingart, 1988) – relation i) exposed in **Exhibit A**. Thus, in PT's case, having individual goals and focusing only in department-related objectives is harmful for the company's performance. With task interdependence, there is the need to develop group goals, which is currently not happening, leading to a weakened inter-department coordination harmful to this unit's overall performance. But, as previously stated, shared goals improve performance if the levels of communication and information transparency are high (De Snoo, 2011) – hence, the close relation between coordination and communication. In this sense, the reason behind each department establishing individual goals today, instead of group goals, may consist in the fact that there is poor communication between departments in this unit – without strong information transmitting means and systems it is more reasonable to establish individual goals, according to Cornelis de Snoo (2011). Following this line of thought, employees were asked the tools and systems they had to communicate with each other. Workers claimed only having scarce spontaneous informal talks and a software that allowed them to manage only online campaigns developed by each department – meaning that every other e-mail, or SMS, not related with a specific marketing campaign was not monitored, coordinated, nor discussed between departments. It was also stated that sometimes they barely knew the person handling a specific task, only the department responsible. When they need something, they call, or message through the company's intranet someone in that department. Beyond this, there was no other informal, or formal communication form, showing poor communication and information transparency, which directly affects effort coordination.



In this context, and to deepen this analysis, it is going to be assumed that the lack of alignment, communication and coordination produces a negative effect on the relevance of the content delivered to customers in their text, or e-mail inboxes – this can be caused by multiple factors, e.g.: the fact that a certain e-mail is not sent at a certain time because the database was already used that week, or the fact that each departments pulls the customer towards its individual interest affects the relevance of the content displayed in SMSs and e-mails. Thus, it was decided to analyze the answers from the survey questions 20 and 21 (**Exhibit C**) and check for significant differences between the results PT got in terms of relevance (for both e-mail and SMS) and compare it with its main competitors in the Portuguese market (NOS and Vodafone). No other competitors were taken into account, due to the reduced number of observations related (Cabovisão: n = 4; Other Operators: n = 30). Assuming the Likert scale, as previously stated, the “*Discordo Totalmente*” category is represented by the number one, and the category “*Concordo Totalmente*” is assumed by the number five. Regarding the e-mail touchpoint on content relevance, the descriptive statistics state that PT has a mean response of 2,96, NOS has 2,97 and Vodafone reaches 3,17 (**Exhibit E**). As to the SMS channel, these values correspond to PT at 2,88, NOS with 3,16 and Vodafone with 3,29. At first sight, on the e-mail touchpoint, the results obtained on PT and NOS are very similar and keep some distance from Vodafone’s results. However, regarding the SMS channel, these values are more distant from each other for all the telecom operators considered (**Exhibit F**). Nevertheless, to observe if there are statistically significant differences, a pairwise comparison was made and allowed the conclusion that, while there are not statistically significant differences regarding the content relevance of the e-mail between the different operators considered (**Exhibit E**) – the significance required was at least 5% – there is a significant difference concerning the SMS touchpoint. As shown in **Exhibit F**, when comparing MEO with NOS regarding content relevance of SMSs, it is possible to state with 95% confidence that the difference of results

between these companies is statistically significant. In the same way, when comparing MEO with Vodafone, the significance is close to 0,00%, which supports the conclusion on the difference being statistically significant with 99,9(9)% confidence. Thus, it is possible to conclude that, assuming that tactical alignment, effort coordination and internal communication produce a negative effect on the content relevance of what is delivered to the customers, the lack of these practices is observed when the SMS touchpoint is analyzed, in comparison with PT's main competitors, but it is not observed when the e-mail touchpoint is considered, relatively to the competition. It is important to note that these results do not directly allow to conclude that PT is lacking alignment and coordination, since it is a comparative analysis.

#### *Process Standardization*

As to process standardization, as previously stated, PT has a document called “*Guia Essencial de Estilo*” (Essential Styling Guide – ESG) describing the main communication principles and the preferred tone of voice and styling, which instils the positioning and type of relationship the company wishes to establish with customers. Thus, it is possible to state that the text, content, sender information and subject of the message follow a certain set of standardized rules that aids PT in terms of efficiency, consistency and effectiveness. On the other hand, the layout (in the case of e-mails) is already predefined according to the type of e-mail. In this sense, the aspect more open to the employee's judgement are the pictures in the e-mail – which change from e-mail to e-mail. Nevertheless, this is less prone to be standardized, as images must be always different according to different offers and contexts, in order not to saturate the customer. In this sense, the great majority of the process of creating and sending an e-mail, or SMS, is already standardized leaving small room for improvement. However, the fact the company lacks tactical alignment, effort coordination and internal communication between employees may have an impact on the monitoring and following of the standardization guidelines. In this

context, it may prove fruitful to analyze the compliance of the e-mails and SMSs with the guidelines imposed.

Thus, with the aim of producing insights concerning possible deviations regarding the e-mail and SMS touchpoints and the standardized rules, every type of e-mail and SMS was analyzed and faced with every rule. There are general guidelines that must be applied to every communication form and rules that are specific of the type of written communication mean used (letter, e-mail, or SMS). Regarding the general guidelines, it was observed that only nine out of 12 were applied— meaning that there were three rules that were not observed in many messages (**Exhibit G**). About specific e-mail guidelines, from the four guidelines identified – concerning the subject line, greeting, text and signature – half of these rules were frequently not applied in the company’s e-mails, as it can be seen in **Exhibit H**. As to specific SMS guidelines, there were only two rules to be followed, and after reviewing the SMSs currently being sent by PT, it was not found any objection to these guidelines. Hence, it is possible to state that 25% of the general guidelines are not applied in some of the e-mails and SMSs reviewed, 50% of the e-mail specific rules are not followed in some cases and 100% of the guidelines established exclusively for the SMSs are applied. In this sense, it is possible to conclude that even though there is a documentation of the processes e-mails and SMSs must respect, there is not a widespread knowledge and control for the respect of this rules.

# Recommendations

## *Strategic and Tactical Alignment*

Concerning the strategic alignment among workers in the UTDO, there is not much potential for progress, as employees are already aware of PT's priorities and strategic objectives. On the other hand, there is still room for improvement on tactical alignment, since this unit is not collectively working towards a common shared objective. By establishing a common group goal, each department in the unit would be working towards an objective through their individual functions and tools. It is important to state that different departments have different functions and naturally have different objectives, otherwise there would not be a department distinction. Nevertheless, it is also important for the departments to share a common purpose uniting them to a certain path. As previously stated, task interdependence is observed on the roles performed by each department, and "task interdependence requires people to work together, individuals need to develop cooperative strategies to be successful on such tasks" (Mitchell & Silver, 1990). Thus, the value added to the final output improves, as group goals are established in the case of interdependent tasks, motivating individuals to cooperate and develop valuable performance strategies (Weldon & Weingart, 1988). In example, by imposing the unit-wise goal of migrating traffic from offline channels to online touchpoints, then, even though the objective of the e-commerce department would likely be to increase online sales, measures should be taken to lock consumers in the online platform, not only practices that uniquely incentivize online purchasing. The same goes for the e-care department which has the objective of increasing the customer engagement and service levels. Working towards increasing the amount of customers using the e-care platform would be beneficial for both the department's individual objectives and the shared group goal. Also, the digital marketing department would be working on, not only promoting and sharing campaigns with consumers, but also on digital onboarding them. In this sense, if the UTDO is to increase tactical alignment

among its different departments it should not opt for establishing only individual, nor group goals, but establish both. According to scientific research and empirical testing, the performance of a certain group of people is significantly superior if they formulate individual goals, instead of group goals, generally. Nevertheless, the same study proved that adding the variable information transparency produces a strong positive impact on the performance in the case of shared group goals (De Snoo, 2011). In this sense, individual goals would enhance the focus and the departments' performance, and, in compliance with full information communication and transparency mechanisms, group goals would also show a positive effect on performance and would allow the production of an increased value output. Thus, it is crucial for this initiative to be aligned with efforts in terms of increasing the unit's internal communication and information transparency levels.

#### *Communication and Effort Coordination*

In this context, it is crucial to reinforce communication practices and mechanisms that enhance coordination of efforts on three fronts: current activities, future activity planning and customer information. In this sense, a software similar to the one used by the digital marketing department in aiding campaign-monitoring should be extended to every e-mail and SMS the company sends. In other words, every person from each department should have access to the type of messages that were sent in the previous days and what is being planned to be sent in the next days and weeks, allowing a better planning of the communication between the company and the customer. This initiative would allow employees to keep track of the current activities being carried by the whole unit and who is responsible for them. Also, to increase performance and effort coordination, joint planning would be an important cornerstone for the unit. This could consist in a monthly meeting involving at least one person from each department and the head of the unit in order to better decide what would be the tasks for each department in that period and certify that they do not intersect each other while performing those tasks. By involving

everyone and making employees work together, cooperative strategies would be developed and every person would develop awareness as to the role each one is performing and would likely increase team working skills, as well as it would improve the integration and motivation of workers by acknowledging their work as a part of something bigger than the short-term objectives imposed for each department – this also relates to tactical and strategic alignment. Moreover, information regarding customers should also be gathered, assembled and made easily available for every department, since there are sections of the unit that have access to certain information that may not interest that specific department, but may be of interest for others, as stated by an interviewee. In this sense, it is advisable for the unit to create an improved and easily adaptable database in which information about customers could be readily updated on a frequent basis. This would help each department improve their targeting while sending messages to customers, increasing the content relevance for customers as well as the unit's overall effectiveness.

The previously stated initiatives would address the three specific problems stated by an interviewee, which complained about information transparency on each department's current activities, task planning and customer information. In consonance with what was stated by other interviewees, there was a general consensus regarding the need for reform in this unit. The fact that it is a recent section in the company and the impact of the current restructuration process were the two main unanimous factors appointed for the current lack of organization and need of structural change.

#### *Process Standardization*

About process standardization, it has been concluded on the previous section of the current work that most of the processes related to the sending of an e-mail and an SMS were already standardized. The real problem detected on this topic resides on the enforcement and monitoring of the standardized rules and guidelines. In this sense, aiming at increasing the adoption of the

standardized practices, the unit should firstly ensure that its members know exactly the rules and guidelines established. In other words, if workers are not aware of what is stated in the ESG, it is expected that more flights to what is established will be observed. An exemplary practice to solve this problem would be to enforce a formal course mandatory to every person explaining the rules and the reason behind the existence of such guidelines, hence aligning employees' perspective across the whole unit. This initiative would likely increase the enforcement of the standardization practices, however it would not be related to the monitoring of rule compliance. The ideal would be to analyze every message sent (e-mail and SMS) and observe the degree of compliance with the standardization guidelines. Nevertheless, this control would not be financially viable, as it would likely be costly and not worth the investment. Thus, the unit could select a small sample of e-mails and SMS on a determined period (e.g.: per month) and analyze the randomly selected messages to foresee any objections to what is established. By observing flights to the standardization rules, the person examining the messages should understand why it was done, who did it, what was the context and analyze other related messages to conclude if it is a recurrent practice, or not. After, this worker would report its findings and the appropriate measures to solve the inconsistency would be applied. This monitoring practice can be considered expensive, however externalizing a poor and incoherent image of the company, can be even more harmful.

To sum up, it is important for the UTDO to develop activities that make sure workers are in the same page regarding their specific roles and that there is a constant rich flow of information between departments not only to strengthen the relationship with the customers through SMS and e-mail, but also to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the unit as a whole.

## Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation of the current work consists in the assumption that the lack of tactical alignment, effort coordination, internal communication and enforcement of process standardization are truly externalized and produce harmful effects on the relationship the customers develop with the brand and, consequently, on the company's performance. These effects are assumed to be caused by the lack of consistency in the approach performed by e-mail and SMS and the gap between the relevance of what is delivered today to the customer and the relevance it could potentially attain for that specific person. Future research should focus on studying the link between the variables studied and the externalization of its effects, in order to conclude on the impact these conflicts specifically have on PT's results.

Also, the suggestions given in the Go To section of the present work are based on actions that may produce a quick impact, as required by PT. Nonetheless, to observe a real improvement on the topics studied, one should focus on also searching for solutions that may require structural changes, since, even though these type of recommendations may be more difficult to implement, they are likely to produce a higher impact on the long-term.

This work could have gone further and deeper, had PT maintained a focus on this issue. According to the course of events, the shift in PT's attention hindered the task of gathering information regarding the means used to increase employee alignment, coordination and communication.

To sum up, one should deepen the analysis of the effects these internal inefficiencies have on the company in order to correctly formulate every possible change to be recommended to PT. Further, the solutions gathered should be analyzed following a financial perspective versus the potential impact they could have.



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